

Guidelines for Translators With Additional Notes.

This article is getting a lot of attention, from what I have noticed in stats and downloads. Therefore, I decided to review and add a few more notes, in view of some submissions, I have received recently.

The basic philosophy of my site, <http://thulika.net> is to introduce Telugu culture, customs, traditions, and lifestyles to non-Telugu readers.

Target audience:

Primarily, Americans are our primary audience. Telugu people, especially the youth, who attended English-medium schools and whose knowledge of Telugu culture is minimal are reading these translations. Regardless, readers of other cultures are our target audience. Therefore, your selection of a story and translation should serve that purpose.

My basic premise is: People read translations for two reasons:

1. To learn about the intellectual perceptions of Telugu people; and,
2. to find differences, similarities and cultural peculiarities as depicted in the original stories.

They comprise everyday lifestyles, desires, aspirations, and various issues in real life. These experiences and conditions are the same across cultures but the way they are dealt with are significantly different.

Selection:

- * Stories for translation should be selected, keeping in mind the basic premise mentioned above. They should reflect age-old traditions, customs, intrinsic values, and lifestyles, which are specific to the Telugu people.
- * By the same standard, all stories are not appropriate for translation for foreign audience. **In other words, a highly commended, and award-winning story may not be suitable for the specific purpose in question.**
- * For me, a well-written story, with cultural details is more important than author's reputation or awards.
- * In that sense, stories depicting Westernized lifestyles, situations, and environment are not acceptable.

Native flavor:

Do not strain yourself to bring in the native flavor. Do not resort to word-for-word translation in the name of native flavor. It will not work.

It is important to make your translation an enjoyable reading for readers who are not familiar with our culture and traditions.

Phrases and idioms:

Translation of phrases and idioms should capture the reader's imagination and convey the cultural nuance.

Before using English equivalents, try to see if you can translate the Telugu phrases in order to highlight the Telugu nuance. Only if it works, use it and give further explanation in a footnote.

Telugu phrases may be classified into three categories:

1. Phrases that lend themselves to straight translation:

e.g. పుస్తకపురుగు - bookworm.

చెవిని వేసుకోడు - turns a deaf ear.

మన్ను తిన్న పాములా can be translated as "like a snake that snacked on dirt". It is a close enough translation, but further explanation in a footnote is necessary.

Another important note is about idioms in older stories. Some of them have idioms, which are unknown now. Malladi Ramakrishna Sastry's story నోహం has a phrase,

మంచి చేసుకు వచ్చు, which means "making food arrangements with a పూటకూళ్లమ్మ".

Once again, పూటకూళ్లమ్మ also is a feature peculiar to Telugu people and needs a footnote.

My point is, do not take all words as they appear to be, especially in the stories written by scholars.

2. Phrases and idioms that require some effort.

Mostly, it depends on the context.

e.g. బిస్కట్లకోసం పిల్ల ఏడుస్తుంటే, తండ్రి ఒక్కటిస్తే సరి అన్నాడు.

The verb ఒక్కటిచ్చు may mean either "give her one cookie" or "smack her". In such instances, translating what it means in the context is enough. No need for elaborate explanation.

Phrases, which require some effort to make them comprehensible in translation

Some phrases may not be translatable, while others leave some room for you to be creative.

I translated కొండవీటి చేంతాడు as *Kondaveeti* rope. It is unique. The word "rope" helps the reader to understand that part of the phrase. Additionally, the name కొండవీడు is noun and కొండవీటి is oblique form of the noun. If I were to leave the entire phrase as *Kondaveeti chaantaadu*, the reader is sure to miss the entire connotation. Significance of Kondaveeti chenthadu needs to be explained in a footnote.

Untranslatable Phrases

Culture-specific phrases and idioms are even harder to translate. Frankly, untranslatable. Let us take a culture-specific phrase like లెంపలేసుకొను. No matter how we translate it, it would be impossible for a foreign reader to visualize the actual scene or comprehend the underlying social and religious connotation.

My translation would be, "In reverence, she stroked her cheeks gently." We also be aware of the difference between the phrase లెంపకాయ ఇచ్చు and లెంపలేసుకొను. The first involves two people and implies anger. On the other hand, the second phrase happens in the context of expressing deference or remorse by one person.

Nouns, Pronouns, and Proper nouns.

Nouns like జుకాలు and కంటే should be italicized the first time the word occurs in a story, and continued with normal font in the rest of the story.

Pronouns like వాడు, అతను, ఆయన, అది, ఆవిడ, ఆమె--all translate into two pronouns he and she in English. Sometimes it complicates the story. For instance, ఆయన అతన్ని పిలుచుకురమ్మని వాడితో చెప్పేరు translates into "he told him to bring him". Translator needs to make sure that the sentence in English makes sense. One way is to insert names or relational terminology, depending on the storyline.

Proper nouns can be classified into two groups: 1. Given names and 2. relational terminology. Normally, given names are not a problem. However, long given names could be tiresome for non-native speakers, especially, if the two names start with similar syllables.

Example: శ్రీమన్నారాయణ and శ్రీనివాసరావు, or సీతారాముడు and శ్రీరాములు could be confusing for those, who are not familiar with such names. Possibly, the readers may go by the first few syllables, as a kind of tip, they would create for themselves. One way is to shorten the name with author's permission. I must admit I am not fully sure what is the best way to address this issue.

2.Relational terminology can be troublesome in some cases such as అత్త, వదిన, బావ, పినమేనమామ.

My practice is to use them as is, and provide an explanation in a footnote. Further,

* First letter of the name should be capitalized. e.g. Attamma, Vadina.

* When using professional terms such as జడ్జీగారు, డాక్టరుగారు, use them as proper nouns, and spell them as pronounced. e.g. Jadjee garu, Dactaru garu.

Non-finite verbs:

Long-winding sentences with non-finite verbs may be broken into several sentences; or, as a string of short sentences, using past tense, assuming the story is being told in past tense.

కాఫీ తాగి, బజారుకెళ్లి బట్టలు కొనుక్కుని, సినిమా చూసి, రాత్రి పదిగంటలకి వచ్చేడు may be translated as "He had coffee, went to the store, bought clothes, saw a movie and returned home at 10 o'clock at night."

Alternatively, the sentence can be broken into into 2 or 3 sentences.

Tense:

Start with one point of reference, and proceed with the narration, going back and forth from that point. Switching tense in Telugu stories is somewhat erratic. In English, consistency is a requirement.

Here are some ways to handle it. Assuming the story is told in the past tense, prior incidents can be narrated by

1. Changing to past perfect;
2. Changing fonts to italics. Remember, however, to use italics sparingly. Normal practice is no more than one or two words or sentences, at most.
3. Adding a short sentence also helps. Before starting narrating a previous incident, the paragraph, an introductory line such as "he recalled/remembered" may be added. Similarly at the end, a closing line like, "he returned to present" helps.

Nuance or dhvani

This is where the peculiarities of our language and author's style are highlighted.

Words like మడి, అంటు, బారెడు పొద్దు, పేదరాసి పెద్దమ్మ, దిప్తి తీసేయడం, సోదీ are not easy to translate. Currently, some equivalents are in use. However, I am not sure, to what extent, they are known around the world. It is acceptable to use the words as is and explain them in footnotes.

Proverbs

Proverbs are fun to translate. Some are easy to translate.

e.g. కొరివితో తల గోక్కున్నట్టు.

Like one scratching one's head with a burning torch.

Some are hard.

అడుగులకు మడుగులొత్తడం carries a deeper cultural nuance. మడుగులు means మడతలు, sheets of cloth. The adage refers to spreading sheets for guest of honor to walk on, similar to red carpet treatment. Obviously, this needs a footnote.

Humor

Just remember what is funny for us may not be funny and acceptable in other cultures. A classic example is couples teasing each other. Actually, teasing between two people in the presence of strangers, as in parties, may not go well. Footnotes may not help either. It is better not to try to translate humor stories. I have posted some humor stories, just to show our kind of humor, but I would not consider such stories anymore.

Other items that need to be addressed.

After seeing a submission I have received recently, I decided to include them there. I am sure most of you know these details. Nevertheless, I thought it would not hurt to specify them.

1. The original author is the author of translation, not the translator.

Example:

Correct: Geetanjali by Ravindranath Tagore. Translated by [translator's name].

Incorrect: Geetanjali by [translator's name]

- Formatting:

First letters of each word in the title are capitalized. A, an, the, etc. are not capitalized unless they are at the beginning of the title. Check internet for further notes.

Example: Guidelines for Translating Stories for My Site.

- Italics:

Use them sparingly. Italics are used only for 1 or 2 words or 1 or 2 sentences. Never for the entire paragraph.

Italics are used to identify foreign or uncommon words. Only first time the word occurs in the story.

Footnotes: This is important. Make sure you are giving the footnotes in the appropriate form and only where they are necessary.

On a personal note, it has become a problem for me. In the past, when I copy and past in Wordpress page, it automatically carried the HTML codes. Now I have to insert them myself again on Wordpress page.

In this context, I am asking your help. If you know how to do it, you can do yourself. Or, check the story after it is posted on my site, and see if all your italics and footnotes are correctly displayed. If you find something missing, let me know and I will correct it. I apologize for this inconvenience.

On a final note,

- Check grammar online. There are websites that are helpful. I am not saying the site always right. You will know after you check their suggestions.

- Look up for words that serve precisely the intended meaning in your story. Thesaurus has been very helpful to me.

- Also, include permission letters from from both, author, translator, in the following format.

I authorize Nidadavolu Malathi to publish my story, [title of the story] on thulika.net and only on their site, but for no other purpose. I retain the rights to the story.

[signed by author, dated]

I authorize Nidadavolu Malathi to publish my translator of the story, [title of the story by (author's name)] on thulika.net and only on their site, but for no other purpose. I retain the rights to the translation of this story.

[signed by translator, dated]

You may also include dates of birth and photos of author and translator for "Authors and Translators" page. This is optional.

Remember, it is all about conveying the author's message/views to the target audience in a manner that appeals to them. Of course, we do not know who will read, but, for the purpose of publication on my site, I will consider Americans as our primary audience.

Also, it helps to read a few English stories paying attention to formatting. I mean watch which words were italicized, which letters capitalized, and how footnotes were handled.

Hope this helps. All the best,

Nidadavolu Malathi
August 25, 2022